

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**SENT TO D.C.**

*6-28-06*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name **Eugene Field Park**

other names/site number **Central Park, Park #41**

**2. Location**

street & number **5100 North Ridgeway Avenue** \_\_\_\_\_ Not for publication

city or town **Chicago** \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity

state **Illinois** code **IL** county **Cook** code **031** zip code **60625**

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide  locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*William L. Wheel* **SHR**  
Signature of certifying official

*6-28-2006*  
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

\_\_\_\_\_  
American Indian Tribe

**Eugene Field Park**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

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I. hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

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**5. Classification**

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Ownership of Property  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

Category of Property  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

Number of Resources within Property  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> sites
<u>11</u>	<u>5</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>2</u> objects
<u>13</u>	<u>9</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register      N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District**

**Eugene Field Park**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**LANDSCAPE/ park**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ sports facility**  
**OTHER/ field house**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**LANDSCAPE/ park**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ sports facility**  
**OTHER/ field house**

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Tudor Revival**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation    **Concrete**

Roof            **Asphalt**

Walls          **Brick**

other          **Vegetation**

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Eugene Field Park**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

**Entertainment/ Recreation**

**Social History**

**Architecture**

Period of Significance **1925 to 1956** Significant Dates **1930**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder **Hatzfeld, Clarence, architect**

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) **See continuation sheets**

Eugene Field Park  
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois  
County and State

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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository **Chicago Park District**

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property **16 acres**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	_____	_____	3	_____
2	_____	_____	4	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**See continuation sheets**

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**See continuation sheets**

**Eugene Field Park**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title     Julia S. Bachrach  
organization   Chicago Park District             date   1/20/06  
street & number 541 N. Fairbanks Ave.             telephone   (312) 742-4698  
city or town   Chicago                             state       IL             zip code   60611

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:  
Continuation Sheets

**Maps**

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name   Timothy J. Mitchell, General Supt. and CEO, Chicago Park District  
street & number     541 N. Fairbanks                             telephone  
city or town   Chicago                             state       IL             zip code   60611

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Section 7 Page 1

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

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**Narrative Description**

Eugene Field Park is a 16 acre site located at 5100 north and 3700 west in Chicago. The site was created by the Albany Park District, one of 22 park commissions consolidated into the Chicago Park District in 1934. The Albany Park District formed in 1917 to provide neighborhood parks and improve and maintain streets, walkways, and parkways for its Northwest side community. The small park district had difficulties in purchasing land for park development. It finally made its initial purchases for Eugene Field (Central) and Kiwanis (East) Parks in 1923. The earliest improvements to Eugene Field Park were made in 1925; however, land acquisition continued throughout the history of the park, the most recent extension having occurred between 2001 and 2005. Landscape gardener Henry J. Stockmans prepared the original plan for Eugene Field Park. Consulting architect Clarence Hatzfeld made various recommendations about park development and designed the footbridge and field house, which were both completed by 1930.

Eugene Field Park consists of 22 resources: 13 contributing and 9 non-contributing. The contributing resources include one building, eleven structures; and one site consisting of landscape, athletic fields, plantings, and pathways. Among the park's non-contributing features are two sites. The Chicago Park District acquired these parcels of land in efforts to increase the amount of publicly owned open space in this area along the North Branch of the Chicago River. The 1.4 acre parcel was previously part of Bohemian National Cemetery and lies north of Foster Avenue. The 1.83 acre parcel lies to the northeast of the intersection of West Foster Avenue and Pulaski Avenue. Although, West Foster Avenue divides the north parcel from the older part of the park, and the west parcel is not contiguous, the Chicago Park District considers the added land an expansion to Eugene Field Park.

Over the years, Eugene Field Park has continuously adapted to the frequently changing needs of the surrounding community while retaining a high level of integrity. The property retains a great deal of fabric dating from its period of significance, and is primarily composed of contributing features. In order to clearly describe the park and show that it retains sufficient integrity to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, three corresponding plans are submitted as part of this nomination: a 1940 Topographic Survey and General Plan [A]; a 1948 plan, entitled *Rebuilding of Outdoor Facilities & Development of Park Extension*; and a 1979 Chicago Park District Plot Plan [C]. Three aerial photos are also attached to help define the contributing and two non-contributing parcels.

Eugene Field Park's stately brick field house [1] is located south of the North Branch of the Chicago River facing North Ridgeway Avenue [A]. Architect Clarence Hatzfeld designed the structure in 1928. It was fully constructed and opened to the public in 1930. Its Tudor Revival style is articulated through its steeply pitched cross-gables, half timbering, pattered brick, multi-paned windows and crenulated cornice at the façade's north bay.

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

The field house is a two-story structure with a basement. Originally serving as the headquarters of the Albany Park District, as well as a cultural and recreational center; today, it is deemed a cultural center, focusing on the arts and drama while also providing athletic programming. The building had a gymnasium, assembly hall (with stage), numerous clubrooms and classrooms, a kitchen and offices. T-shaped in plan, it has cross-gabled roofs with overhanging eaves. Originally, the roof was slate; however, today it is composed of asphalt tiles. The building is composed of wire cut brick in variegated shades of orange, red, and brown. Random pieces of rusticated limestone appear sporadically along the facades of east portion of the building (which extends north to south and could be considered the top of the T-shaped plan). These facades also have stucco and half-timbering at the gable ends.

The front entrance is symmetrically placed with the center of the primary (east) façade fronting onto North Ridgeway Avenue. Several steps lead up to three arched openings flanked by a pair of blind arches. The three arches open to a vestibule and the entrance is set back. A mosaic mural is located in this vestibule. Produced by children from Eugene Field Park under the guidance of Gerry Lang of the Chicago Public Art Group, the mural is composed of multi colored fired ceramic pieces. At the second level of the center bay, there is a balcony extending across the three arched openings and two blind arches. All five arches have irregularly placed limestone quoins. The balcony rests on a series of brackets. It has an ornamental metal railing. There is a doorway leading to the balcony located above the front doorway at the first floor of the building. The double doors are multi-paned and topped with multi-paned transoms. This fenestration is repeated in the two sets of casement windows surrounded by multi-paned transoms flanking the center doorway. In recent years, the Chicago Park District installed canvas awnings in metal frames above all five of these openings.

The primary façade's two outer bays project forward. The south bay is a double intersecting gable, and the north bay is a single intersecting gable. The double intersecting gable has stucco and half timbering within the gable ends. The timber elements extend downward to frame and divide the windows. The fenestration on both the first and second stories consists of three multi-paned casement windows. There is stucco between the first story and second story windows. Today, there is a mural mounted in this area. The mural was a children's art project and is considered temporary. At the foundation level, there are three double hung windows that provide light to the basement of the field house.

The north bay has half timbering and stucco only within the pediment area of its gable end. At the first story, there is a large multi-paned window (composed of two casement windows with fixed transoms above and between). There are two double hung windows at the foundation level. The windows are placed within a brick projecting bay. There are random pieces of rusticated limestone, particularly along the edges of the projecting bay. A smooth string course extends across the brick between the foundation level and the first story. Another smooth string course extends across the top of the first story window, above an awning that matches the five awnings that are located on the second story of the building. Above the stringcourse is a crenulated cornice composed of brick and limestone.



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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

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The rear portion of the building extends east to west. It has a gabled roof with a jerkin-head at the west end. The façades of this portion of the building do not have the half-timbering. The north and south façades have windows only at the second story and foundation level. The upper casement windows have multi-panes similar to those of the windows at the primary façade. There are two double hung windows at the foundation level beneath each multi-paned window at the second story. The windows are placed within recessed brick areas forming rectangular patterns. Within each recessed vertical rectangle, there is handsome brick work. This pattern is repeated in the west façade; however, here there are no windows at the second story level.

The field house has many fine interior details such as terrazzo floors, decorative brackets in the hallway, exposed trusses and original lighting fixtures in the auditorium, and a marble niche for the water fountain on the second story. Also on the second story level, there are two noteworthy paintings. One is a portrait of Eugene Field signed by artist Joshua Holland in 1941. The other is a mural entitled "The Participation of Youth in the Realm of the Fine Arts." It also dates to the WPA period and is believed to have been produced by students of a Chicago Park District art class. Both paintings have recently been conserved by the Chicago Conservation Center.

The circular drive [2] in front of the field house aligns with North Ridgeway Avenue. This roadway configuration has existed in the park since 1930, when the field house was completed or even earlier [A]. Historically, there was a sunken fountain and planter with rocky edging within the circular lawn. Today, there are three ornamental trees and several boulders on the circular lawn.

Historically, the landscape [3] east of the field house on the south side of the North Branch of the Chicago River was a passive area featuring tightly winding paths, trees and shrubs [A]. The historic boundary was approximately at North Lawndale Avenue; however, the park was extended by approximately .5-acres east to North Monticello Avenue in 1979 [C]. The project included improvements to this area such as the extension of the pathway, plantings, and installation of several concrete lampposts with acorn luminaries. The City of Chicago constructed a bridge [4] over the river at the eastern boundary of the Eugene Field Park in the late 1990s. This bridge is referred to as the Carmen Avenue Connector.

In 2003, the Chicago Park District created a bicycle trail system to link Eugene Field Park with a series of open spaces along the river (such as Kiwanis and River parks to the east and Gompers Park to the west). The historic paths at the eastern part of the park [3] were removed to make way for the new bicycle path. The bike trail [5] links with the Carmen Avenue Connector [4] at the east. It extends west along the south side of the field house. Historically, this area had a double oval path with trimmed hedges in the center. The bicycle trail is composed of asphalt. It includes concrete lampposts with acorn luminaries matching those that were installed in the easternmost part of the park in 1979.

The North Branch of the Chicago River [6] cuts diagonally through the historic park. During the 1930s, the WPA improvements to the park included the construction of a retaining wall on the south bank of the river. The project addressed the south side because erosion was more severe here. At that time, the wall was

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

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described as a rubble retaining wall [A]. It is composed of rectangular concrete blocks of various sizes in courses resembling ashlar masonry. This WPA project included the installation of 4' high chain link fencing on the south side of the river. East of North Lawndale Avenue, additional erosion control methods have been installed more recently. These include metal sheet pilings, and concrete and nylon erosion control matting. Extending east between the footbridge [7] and the Carmen Avenue Connector [4], there is a V-shaped concrete channel on the floor of the river. This was part of a 1940-41 WPA project conducted by the City of Chicago's Department of Rivers and Harbors. Today, the North Branch of the Chicago River remains as an important historic and natural feature of the park. Views of the river, however, are largely obstructed by the dense woody vegetative growth along the banks and the chain link fencing. The tree canopy along the banks has also caused erosion that contributes to the park's problems with flooding.

Eugene Field Park's footbridge [7] provides a pedestrian connection for the two sides of the park bisected by the river. Hatzfeld designed the footbridge in 1927, and it was constructed the following year. Historically, the bridge was quite rustic in its appearance. An arched wooden deck extended over the metal support beams. It had rough hewn timber rails configured in x-shapes, and a covered shelter with timber posts at its north and south ends. There were two benches that faced each other beneath each of the footbridge's shelters. In 1942, the Chicago Park District substantially rebuilt the footbridge, retaining the shelters, but replacing the original rails with metal pipe rails. It is uncertain as to when the shelters were removed. In 1995, the Chicago Park District rebuilt the footbridge again, retaining the original structural steel elements. Today the bridge has asphalt covering concrete decking, and chain link fencing in lieu of railings. There are bollards at the north and south ends to prevent vehicles from crossing the footbridge.

Many of the park's facilities for active recreation are northwest of the field house and south of the river. To provide night lighting for the various facilities, the Chicago Park District constructed a floodlight in 1937. The 60' tall metal floodlight tower [8] is still used today and conveys its historic appearance. Historically, there was a flag pole with a World War I marker located west of the flood light. After this fell into deterioration, community members requested its removal. The park district demolished the war memorial marker in the 1980s.

Tennis courts [9] were one of the first features installed in the park, and they have been in the same location since 1925 or 1930. Originally, they were enclosed with chain link fencing, as they are today, although the courts and fencing have been updated from time to time over the years. Today, there are four tennis courts and one combination tennis and volleyball court.

Just north of the tennis courts is the playground area. Historically, there were two playgrounds (presumably one for boys and one for girls) divided by oval paths. Additional features intended for both genders (such as wading pool, sandbox, and swings) were north of these two areas, and a small building located at the northernmost corner, just south of West Foster Avenue. The building was first used as a garage, then as the park's first field house, and later provided a meeting room and restrooms. The park district demolished this structure in 1975.

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

In the early 1950s [B], the park district redeveloped the playground area. The historic paths were removed and replaced with a sand court [10], open shelter [11], wading pool [12] and basket ball court [13]. These features remain in the park and convey their appearance from this period. The open shelter [11] is a modest structure with a flat roof. Sometime between the 1970s and the late 1980s, the wading pool was converted to a spray pool while retaining its form and much of the original concrete (**check**). The playground was updated with the removal of earlier equipment and installation of a soft surface playground in 1991 [14]. The playground area is enclosed by ornamental fencing, which was a relatively recent addition and deemed a non-contributing feature. The basket ball court [13] dates to the early 1950s, although it is not depicted in the 1948 redevelopment plan [C].

The park area north of the Chicago River is composed of a passive landscape [15] on the west side and athletic fields [16] on the east side. The passive landscape [14] has a naturalistic design composed of paths, groves of trees, and benches. A 1937 survey indicates that there were numerous hawthorn, elm, cottonwood, maple, black oak, and ash trees in this area. These trees were probably from the original planting of the area and many of the mature trees remain today. The athletic fields on the east side [16] include a three-acre extension that was added in the late 1940s [C]. Today, this area is used for soccer, football, and softball. Both areas [15, 16] are attractive landscapes that continue to convey their historic character.

Funding through an Open Land Trust Grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources has allowed for the expansion of Eugene Field Park by 3.23 acres between 2001 and 2005. The additional areas are considered non-contributing sites. A 1.4-acre crescent-shaped parcel [17] lies north of West Foster Avenue. Previously part of the Bohemian National Cemetery, this site includes the south bank of the river. The other non-contributing site [18] is south of West Foster Avenue and lies west of the historic park. It is not contiguous to the western boundary of Eugene Field Park at North Avers Avenue. Private property lies between the newly acquired western parcel and the historic park. This site [18] is 1.83-acres in size, and is carved into two portions by the North Branch of the Chicago River. The Chicago Park District intends to develop the newly acquired parcels [17, 18] as passive areas with trees, paths, benches. These will be treated in a naturalistic manner with emphasis on views of the North Branch of the Chicago River.

Today, Eugene Field Park retains a strong degree of historic integrity. The park provides many of the same programs as it did historically. It has also adapted to modern needs, while retaining much of its historic fabric. The park's new elements such as the bike path, Carmen Avenue Connector, and new landscape areas do not detract from the park's historic character. Eugene Field Park continues to convey its naturalistic character along the banks of the North Branch of the Chicago River and remains a valuable cultural and recreational asset to the Albany Park community.

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

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**Eugene Field Park List of Historic Resources**

**Contributing Resources**

**Non-contributing Resources**

Field House (1)

Landscape (3)—  
includes athletic field (15),  
walkways, and semi-circular  
drive(2)

**Buildings**

**Sites**

**Structures**

5 Tennis Courts (9)  
Light Tower(8)  
Spraypool (12)  
Sand court (10)  
Shelter (11)  
Basketball Court (13)  
Old River Wall (6)

2 Landscape extensions to park (17, 18)

Soft Surface Playground (14)  
Footbridge (7)  
Parking Lot  
Sheet Piling  
Carmen Ave. Connector (4)  
Bike Trail (5)

**Objects**

Ornamental Fencing  
Chain Link Fencing

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

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**Statement of Significance**

Eugene Field Park meets Criterion A and Criterion C for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The property is locally significant as part of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century movement to create breathing spaces with recreational facilities on Chicago's northwest side. In 1917, local residents formed the Albany Park District to improve and maintain parkways and create parks for their neighborhood. The Albany Park Board began acquiring land in the center of the district to establish Eugene Field Park in the early 1920s. Although land acquisition efforts continued for many years, the board soon hired consulting landscape architect Henry J. Stockmans to prepare a plan that would take advantage of the picturesque river bank site. In 1928, architect Clarence Hatzfeld designed a Tudor-Revival style field house for the park. After the consolidation of the Chicago Park District in 1934, Eugene Field Park was expanded to the east and new recreational amenities were added. In recent years, the Chicago Park District has acquired two additional parcels along the river as a further expansion to the park. Following the goals of the *Chicago River Master Plan: Connecting People to the River*, this new acreage allows for the preservation of additional wildlife habitat, provides valuable green space, and contributes to storm water management within the community.

This property qualifies for listing on the National Register under the multiple documentation form, "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District." The property is locally significant during a period spanning from 1925 when the Albany Park District began making initial improvements to 1956, the current fifty-year cut-off date for the National Register of Historic Places. The property meets with the following areas of significance: Entertainment/ Recreation, Social History, and Architecture.

Located on the Northwest side of Chicago, Eugene Field Park lies within the Albany Park community, straddling the banks of the North Branch of the Chicago River. Historically, it was a bucolic suburban area that had several farms, a large brickyard, and two popular horse racing venues—the Diamond and Rusk Tracks. The area was annexed to Chicago in 1889, as part of Jefferson Park Township. In 1893, a group of real estate investors purchased 640 acres of farmland in the area to develop as a residential neighborhood. "The real-estate syndicate included four prominent Chicagoans: streetcar magnate DeLancy Lauderbach, John J. Mitchell of the Illinois Trust and Savings Bank, Northwestern Elevated owner Clarence Buckingham, and transportation mogul Charles T. Yerkes."<sup>1</sup> Lauderbach, who had grown up in Albany New York, named the community in honor of his hometown. In 1896, the investors successfully linked electric streetcars to the area, and the Ravenswood Elevated Line extended into the community about a decade later.

Albany Park experienced a building boom between the 1910s and 1930. Land values rose from "\$52 per front foot in 1909" to "\$2,750 per front foot by 1929."<sup>2</sup> Attractive brick bungalows and two-flats comprised much of the residential development; commercial properties included Art Deco style store fronts; while many of the area's schools, churches, and synagogues were rendered in Revival styles.

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy B. Neary, "Albany Park," *Encyclopedia of Chicago History*, The University of Chicago Press, 2004, 13-14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

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Since its earliest development, Albany Park attracted many of Chicago's immigrant groups. "Historically, Albany Park has served as a first stop for many European immigrants, and also as a steppingstone for successive population groups moving away from older and denser parts of the city, on their way to the outlying areas of the city and the suburbs."<sup>3</sup> While many Germans and Swedes settled here in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Russian Jews began moving in as early as 1912, and by the early 1920s, they were a predominant group in the neighborhood. Jews who had been living in the Humboldt Park and Logan Square neighborhoods moved north to Albany Park establishing synagogues, schools, social clubs, and community service organizations. "By 1930, Albany Park contained about twenty-three thousand Jews, almost half of the total population of the community. The Jews were concentrated largely in a 1 1/4 -square mile area bounded approximately by the North Branch of the Chicago River on the east, Pulaski Road on the west, Foster Ave. on the north, and Montrose Ave. to the south."<sup>4</sup>

In the late 1910s, community residents began efforts to create public parks for the growing Albany Park neighborhood. In older parts of Chicago, a park movement had begun in the 1850s and 1860s, when real estate speculators, civic boosters, physicians and others pushed for legislation that would allow for the development of an ambitious system of parks and boulevards to serve the growing city. As a result, the State of Illinois approved three separate acts of legislation in 1869 establishing the South, West, and Lincoln Park Commissions. "Although the three park commissions operated independently, the overall goal was to create a unified park and boulevard system that would encircle Chicago."<sup>5</sup> The original properties were Jackson, Washington, Humboldt, Garfield, Douglas and Lincoln Parks, and the connecting boulevards.

By the late 1890s, it had become apparent that the existing parks could no longer satisfy the needs of Chicago's rapidly increasing population. The city's tremendous industrial expansion had enticed vast numbers of European immigrants to settle here. By 1900, nearly 750,000 people, almost half of Chicago's population, resided in the central part of the city, more than a mile away from any park.<sup>6</sup> "Living and working conditions were intolerable, and in order to survive many immigrant families had to put their children to work. If children were lucky enough to have time off, there were few clean or safe places" in the tenement districts, in which they could play.<sup>7</sup>

Chicago's first playground opened at Jane Addams' Hull House in 1893, and social reformers soon spurred a playground movement in efforts to create additional recreational open spaces in the tenement districts, especially for children. Playground advocates "believed that supervised play could improve the mental, moral,

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<sup>3</sup> Chicago Fact Book Consortium. *Local Community Fact Book Chicago Metropolitan Area: Based on the 1970 and 1980 Censuses*. University of Illinois at Chicago, 1984, 37.

<sup>4</sup> Irving Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shetl to Suburb*, University of Illinois Press, 1996, 238.

<sup>5</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago's Parks*, Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, VA: 2001, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Dwight Heald Perkins, *Report of the Special Park Commission to the City Council of Chicago on the Subject of a Metropolitan Park System*. Chicago: 1904, 39.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

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and physical well-being of children, and in the early twentieth century they expanded their calls into a broader recreation movement aimed at providing spaces for adult activities as well.<sup>8</sup> The earliest playgrounds were modest in size, appearance and apparatus.

Shortly after the turn of the century, the South Park Commission developed plans for an ambitious system of new parks to serve the residents of tenement districts within their jurisdiction. As explained in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, General Superintendent, J. Frank Foster conceived an innovative park prototype to provide breathing space as well as social, educational, and recreational amenities to the communities in need (FIII, p. 11). Foster believed that the new parks could function as neighborhood centers that would uplift and improve the lives of the residents of the overcrowded squalid districts. He suggested that, in addition to ball fields and playgrounds, the new parks should also provide a variety of features. Among them were separate outdoor gymnasiums for men and women, swimming and wading pools, running tracks, children's sand courts, and a new type of building, the field house. Based on the precedent of Chicago's settlement houses, the nation's earliest field houses provided "athletic, educational, recreational programs and social services throughout an entire year" with facilities that included public bathing, the earliest branch libraries, indoor gymnasiums and cafeterias.<sup>9</sup>

The South Park Commission's first ten innovative neighborhood parks opened in 1905, proving to be an immediate success. In fact, in 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt described these new parks as "...one of the most notable civic achievements in any American city."<sup>10</sup> By 1910, the Lincoln and West Park Commissions began creating new parks that followed the prototype, and neighborhood parks were soon also built in cities throughout America and Europe. By the following decade, the neighborhood park prototype had become so accepted in Chicago, that modified versions of the park form began to emerge in middle class neighborhoods where the sites served as attractive and popular urban amenities rather than vehicles of social reform.

After the annexation of townships such as Jefferson Park in 1889, it became apparent that these areas would need a political method for creating parks because they did not lie within the jurisdictions of the South, West, or Lincoln Park Commissions. In response to this need, the State of Illinois approved an act on June 24, 1895, which would allow voters in these neighborhoods to form their own park districts. As explained in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (E p. 12), this act established the new park districts as independent municipalities with taxing powers and the ability to "... acquire, lay out, establish, construct and maintain park's and boulevards... and have full power to control, manage and govern the said parks and boulevards and the use thereof."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, "Playground Movement," *Encyclopedia of Chicago History*

<sup>9</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago's Parks*, Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, VA: 2001, 12.

<sup>10</sup> As reprinted in South Park Commission, *Report of the South Park Commissioners For a Period of Fifteen Months from December 1, 1906 to February 29, 1908, inclusive*. Chicago: 1908, 62.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Breen, ed. *Historical Register of the Twenty-Two Superseded Park Districts, 1941, 4A.*

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Between 1896 and the mid 1910s, more than ten independent park districts had been established in Chicago, and by the mid 1930s, there were a total of 22, including the original three commissions that formed in 1869. Residents of the Albany Park community were inspired by the successes of newly formed park districts in other Northwest side neighborhoods. Many of the new districts had limited tax financial resources because of the small taxing jurisdictions. Land acquisition and improvements often occurred in stages, and over a long period of time. Despite these obstacles, by 1915, nearby communities had created the Edison, Ravenswood Manor, and Northwest park districts and several had already improved their new parks with attractive landscapes and field houses.

Residents of the Albany Park neighborhood filed a petition in the County Court, in early 1917, requesting the creation of a park district to serve their area. The community election was held on April 3, 1917. At the election, 555 community members voted in favor and 82 voted against the formation of the park district.<sup>12</sup> The 5-member commission of the Albany Park District held its first meeting on May 7, 1917. Officers were elected, and the fledgling organization began efforts to plant trees, shrubs, and flowers along the roadways of the community and to install playground equipment along large parkway areas and on properties owned by organizations such as Albany Park Presbyterian Church. In June of 1917, the park district board began discussing the possibility of creating a park on property located in the center of their district at the southeast corner of West Foster Avenue and North Avers avenues. The commissioners had received a report that the property had been offered "gratis for park purposes."<sup>13</sup> After sending a letter to the Lehman Estate, which held the property, the Albany Park Board was likely informed that the land was not being offered for parkland, because there was no further discussion about acquiring this site until 1923.

Between 1917 and 1922, the Albany Park Board focused on its small playgrounds; the planting of trees, shrubs, and flowers; repairing brick columns at intersections; and snow plowing of the parkways and sidewalks in the district. In early 1922, the board's attorney, Ernst Buehler, wrote an article which appeared in the Albany Park Blue Book to determine whether the community would support a bond issue that would allow for the acquisition of parkland. In response to the article, a delegation of the West Albany Park Improvement Association attended the board meeting of February 22, 1922. The delegation asserted that as "... the district is growing very rapidly, it is imperative that a site be acquired at an early date for future development as the available locations are gradually being built up."<sup>14</sup> Concerned about significant tax increases, the delegation suggested that the bond issue should be only for the purposes of land acquisition, and that any improvements to the parkland would have to wait until the future. The following spring, the Albany Park Woman's Club submitted a petition that had been signed by 845 residents of the district suggesting that the board should take action to begin establishing a park or playground for the community. This petition stated that if necessary, the board should "secure funds by means of a Bond Issue."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Albany Park District, "Minutes of the Albany Park District," June 11, 1917, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, February 22, 1922, 66.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, April 9, 1923, 83.



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The Albany Park Board soon began negotiating for the purchase of land at the southeast corner of West Foster and North Avers avenues. A resolution was passed, in July of 1923, authorizing \$150,000 bond issue to purchase property and improve it as parkland.<sup>16</sup> The Board did not have enough bonding power to issue \$150,000 in bonds, so the total was lowered to \$130,000. Land acquisition occurred slowly. While the board members made efforts to establish the site that became known as Eugene Field Park, they were also making efforts to establish two other parks and a very small playground. Originally called East, Central and West parks, the three sites became Kiwanis, Eugene Field, and Gompers parks. The small playground, which no longer exists, was referred to as Argyle and Keeler Park or Park Number 43.

In the fall of 1923, the board asked Clarence Hatzfeld to make recommendations regarding the development of the park site at Foster and Avers avenues. A Chicago architect who lived on the city's Northwest side, Hatzfeld produced field house designs for many of the area's small park districts. Hatzfeld asserted that lands lying south of the Chicago River between North Lawndale and North Ridgeway avenues had "little value for park purposes" and thus should be sold.<sup>17</sup> He recommended the extension of the park adjacent to North Hamlin Avenue and east of North Avers Avenue. "Mr. Hatzfeld pointed out advantageous possibilities for the development of athletic facilities south of the Chicago River."<sup>18</sup>

The board voted in favor of Hatzfeld's recommendation to dispose of the property between N. Lawndale and Ridgeway avenues and began efforts to acquire the other properties. In June of 1924, they appointed Clarence Hatzfeld as the Albany Park District consulting engineer for a salary of \$250 per year. The board continued purchasing various parcels of land to create Central (Eugene Field) Park. In May of 1925, board members learned that two lots at the corner of North Ridgeway and West Carmen avenues were available for purchase. Because this area lay just west of the land that had been put up for sale, the board rescinded its previous action to dispose of the land, and it was determined that the entire area would become part of the park.<sup>19</sup>

Mr. Henry J. Stockmans, a gardener and landscape designer, submitted a rough sketch for the park, which was thoroughly discussed by the Albany Park Board on June 22, 1925. The board agreed to Mr. Stockmans' fee of \$500 to furnish plans and specifications for the park's improvement. Born in Germany in 1875 or 1876, Henry J. Stockmans immigrated to the United States in 1900.<sup>20</sup> In the early 1900s, he was the foreman of the landscape department for Chicago's West Park Commission. At the time, renowned Prairie Style designer, Jens Jensen served as General Superintendent and Chief Landscape Architect for the entire West Chicago Park System. In 1907, Jensen and Stockmans were among a group of landscape designers who advised the executive committee of the Horticultural Society of Chicago on how to decorate the Coliseum for the annual flower show. (Following Jensen's advice, "formal decorations" were abandoned in favor of "the naturalistic" as

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, July 9, 1923, 92.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, Nov. 19, 1923, 112.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, May 25, 1925, 115.

<sup>20</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States- 1910 Population, Illinois, Cook County, Mrs. Mabel A. Winegard, enumerator.

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the design motif.<sup>21</sup> In addition to his West Park Commission position, Stockmans began accepting private landscape design commissions as early as 1910, when three of his model home designs were featured in a flower show.<sup>22</sup> He also became well known as a grower on the west side of Chicago. On his Waller Avenue property, he grew a variety of crops, and offered mushroom compost for \$2 a cubic yard including delivery.<sup>23</sup>

Stockmans designed two of three parks for the Albany Park District in the mid 1920s. In 1937, he supervised the creation of an outdoor sunken garden and indoor displays for the Everybody's Flower Show, in Casino Burgoyne, Daytona Beach, Florida.<sup>24</sup> It is unknown as to whether Stockmans had relocated to Florida; however, he designed the War Memorial Gardens there for the grounds of the Ormond Art Museum as late as 1945.

Stockmans' original plans for Eugene Field Park no longer exist; however, his work generally followed Jensen's naturalistic philosophies. As the park was being constructed in 1926, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* asserted that the "park board is to take advantage" of the fact that the "river cuts diagonally across the new breathing space."<sup>25</sup> A history of the park, written in 1941, supports this appraisal of the landscape design:

Every advantage was taken of the inherent beauty of the section, lying as it does along the river branch, to enhance and embellish its wild vegetation and transform it by the artifices of the landscape gardener into the pleasing symmetry of a well arranged park without detracting from that natural beauty.<sup>26</sup>

The Albany Park District began initial improvements to Central (Eugene Field) Park in the spring and early summer of 1925. This included some grading work; the installation of four tennis courts; and construction of a tool house and garage structure. Additional work continued in the spring of 1926. The board's architect, Clarence Hatzfeld prepared plans for a wading pool, lighting throughout the park, and alterations to the garage structure to provide rest rooms and a shelter house. Much of this work was completed in June of 1926, and playground equipment was installed near the new wading pool. The alterations to the tool house, located on the corner of West Foster and North Avers avenues, converted the structure to the park's original field house.

In November of 1926, the Albany Park District officially named the site Eugene Field Park. (The name may have been selected through a contest.<sup>27</sup>) Born in St. Louis, Eugene Field (1850 – 1895) was an important American writer. He came to Chicago as a journalist in 1883, and began writing a humorous column for the *Chicago Daily News* called *Sharps and Flats*. Field played a significant role in Chicago's Literary Movement and is best known for children's poetry such as *Wynken Byynken and Nod* and *Little Boy Blue*.

<sup>21</sup> "Turn Coliseum into "Park" for Horticultural Show," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct. 31, 1907.

<sup>22</sup> "Show Will Teach Spring Planting," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 12, 1912.

<sup>23</sup> JFH Heide "The Successful Home Garden," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 31, 1919.

<sup>24</sup> "Flower Show at Daytona Beach," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 21, 1937.

<sup>25</sup> "Buy Site for 14 Acre Park on North Branch," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 25, 1926.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel F. Breen, ed. *Historical Register of the Twenty-Two Superseded Park Districts*, Chicago Park District, WPA Project 30260, 1941, 17.

<sup>27</sup> "Eugene Field Park Dedicated in Albany Park," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 28, 1928.

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In 1927, the Albany Park Board asked Clarence Hatzfeld to make a survey of Eugene Field Park in order to locate a site for a field house, suggesting that it be built south of the Chicago River facing Ridgeway Avenue.<sup>28</sup> They also instructed him to prepare sketches of a pedestrian bridge that would cross the river in the vicinity of North Ridgeway Avenue. The following year, Hatzfeld designed a brick Tudor Revival style field house for the park.

Clarence Hatzfeld (1873 – 1943) was a Chicago architect who became especially well-known for his numerous and handsome park field house designs. Born in Wisconsin, he had his architectural training largely in the office of Julius Huber.<sup>29</sup> Julius Huber had established his own firm in 1881 after practicing in his father's firm, J. Paul Huber and Son Architects in the 1870s. Hatzfeld may have begun working in Huber's office in the early 1890s. He became a partner in the firm of Julius Huber & Co. for a few years beginning in 1899.<sup>30</sup>

For several years that include the period of 1908 and 1909, Hatzfeld served as a draftsman in the offices of the Chicago Public Schools Architect's Department.<sup>31</sup> He worked under Dwight H. Perkins, who was the official school architect from 1905 to 1910. Perkins was a Prairie School architect who held deep social convictions, and it is likely that at least to some degree his work had an influence on Hatzfeld. In 1910, Hatzfeld formed a partnership with Arthur Knox, who also worked as a Chicago Public School draftsman in 1908 and 1909.<sup>32</sup> Hatzfeld & Knox designed many Prairie and Craftsman style brick bungalows. Several are located in the Villa District, an historic district that has Chicago landmark designation and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. They also designed several homes in the Edgewater community of Chicago. Hatzfeld & Knox designed a handsome brick field house for Independence Park. Constructed in 1914, this proved to be the first of dozens of park buildings that Hatzfeld went on to design in Chicago.

By the late 1910s Clarence Hatzfeld dissolved the partnership and began practicing alone. He had many architectural commissions in the 1920s and early 1930s. Among these were additional residential structures, banks, automobile showrooms and service stations, retail stores and clubs, including the Logan Square Masonic Temple.<sup>33</sup> Hatzfeld also designed more than a dozen field houses for the small independent park commissions in Chicago during this period. He rendered many of these buildings in eclectic Revival styles that were quite popular at the time. Among these were several English Tudor style buildings. In addition to the Eugene Field Park structure, he designed Tudor Revival field houses for Gompers and Indian Boundary parks. (Indian Boundary also has details following a Native American motif). The Spanish Revival style is expressed through

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<sup>28</sup> Albany Park District, "Minutes of the Albany Park District," May 14, 1927, 223.

<sup>29</sup> Illinois Society of Architects Monthly Bulletin, Oct/Nov, 1943, v. 28, no 4-5, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Leroy Blommaert, "Julius Huber, Edgewater Architect: The Man and His Work," v. XIV, n.3, summer, 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Schedule of the Salaries and Proposed Revisions Affecting Employees in the Architect's Department to Take Effect January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1908 and January 1<sup>st</sup> 1909 (on file at the Chicago Historical Society).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. and *American Architect*, May 18, 1910.

<sup>33</sup> There are numerous entries for Hatzfeld in the America Terra Cotta Index on file at the Chicago Landmarks Division of the Department of Planning and Development, City of Chicago.

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his Athletic Park field house. Hatzfeld also produced several Georgian Revival style structures, such as the Kilbourn and Jefferson Park field houses.

In addition to the field house, Hatzfeld designed the park's footbridge that connects the two sides of the site bisected by the Chicago River. The rustic bridge had timber rails and a small covered shelter with benches on each end. The footbridge and field house were both completed in 1928.

The Albany Park District officially dedicated Eugene Field Park on October 21, 1928, while the field house was still under construction. The Junior Boys' Patriotic League, a local boys' club raised money for an American flag for the park by selling old newspapers by the pound. The boys presented the flag to the park officials, and raised the flag during the ceremonies.<sup>34</sup>

In 1930, the field house was completed and opened to the public. It provided many cultural and recreational programs to the community, and also served as headquarters for the Albany Park District. Community theatre was one of the park's most popular activities. In 1931, the Albany Park Players performed their first major production, a three act play entitled, "The Youngest" in the Eugene Field Park field house.<sup>35</sup> The following year, the same group staged three plays in the park: "The Mayor and the Manicure" by George Ade, "The Short Cut" by Percival Wilde, and "To the Ladies" by Kaufman and Connelly.<sup>36</sup>

The use of the park and field house by various groups well reflects the character of the Albany Park neighborhood and life during the Depression years. Jewish organizations that hosted functions in the field house in the early 1930s include: Congregation B'nai Shalom, the men's club of Beth Hamedrosh Hagadol, the Albany Park Hadassah (for bridge and bunko parties), the Kimball Bryn Mawr Hebrew School, and the National Home for Jewish Children of Denver (which held its Chicago Auxiliary event there). Christian groups used the field house as well, such as the Ladies Guild of the Ainslie Baptist Church, the Albany Park Presbyterian Church and the Anglo Saxon Bible Class. Other groups included the Albany Park North End Association, the Albany Park 39<sup>th</sup> Ward Civic Club, and a reading club organized by the Chicago Public Library. The facility was occasionally used for events to raise funds for needy families, and to hold benefits for groups including the Albany Park Employees Association.<sup>37</sup>

By early 1932, the Albany Park District was behind in its bills and unable to pay its employees. A committee of park employees requested payment in the form of tax anticipation warrants. The coal company submitted a letter regarding non-payment of bills, and the Albany Park Board sent a reply that

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<sup>34</sup> "Eugene Field Park Dedicated in Albany Park," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 28, 1928.

<sup>35</sup> "Albany Players Start Work on 'The Youngest'," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 22, 1931.

<sup>36</sup> "Albany Park Group to Give Three Plays," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 15, 1932.

<sup>37</sup> Albany Park District, "Minutes of the Albany Park District," Volume 3 various dates.

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bills "would be paid as soon as funds were available."<sup>38</sup> Commonwealth Edison, the company which provided electricity to the Albany Park District, threatened to discontinue service if the past due account was not paid.<sup>39</sup> The park district tried to continue to function as well as possible, however, it was increasingly clear that it could not weather the financial crisis caused by the Great Depression.

By 1934, there were 22 separate park districts operating simultaneously in Chicago, including the Albany Park District. The depression rendered most, if not all of these independent agencies financially insolvent. To gain access to federal funding through President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, voters approved the Park Consolidation Act of 1934, through which all 22 agencies were unified into the Chicago Park District. Between 1935 and 1941, the newly consolidated Chicago Park District received more than \$82 million in federal funding through the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and PWA (Project Works Administration). State and city funds increased this total to more than \$100 million.<sup>40</sup> Using these funds, the park district made numerous improvements throughout the system, which then included 130 parks with a total of 83 field houses and 50 swimming pools.

The Chicago Park District conducted extensive work in Eugene Field Park in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The ball fields and lawns were reconditioned; concrete sidewalk and cinder paths were laid; the banks of the river graded; more than 1,000 feet of retaining wall and 800 feet of rip rap installed along the river; 4 feet high chain link fence placed along the edges of the river, and the footbridge rebuilt. The park district landscape department also planted shrubs and trees and installed new fencing around the tennis courts. A 60 feet tall floodlight was installed in the lawn northwest of the field house.<sup>41</sup>

The Chicago Park District offered many programs during this period including sports, arts and crafts, music and drama. Eugene Field Park provided baseball, softball, tennis, fencing, wrestling, archery, dancing, summer camp, playground activities, and ice skating in winter. Additional indoor activities were camera club, orchestra and chorus, dramatics, and arts and crafts including knitting, dressmaking, leather craft, wood carving, etc.

Among the Chicago Park District WPA-funded initiatives was an arts program through which professional artists produced paintings for park district facilities or taught classes in which the students created murals and paintings. There are two paintings in Eugene Field Park that were produced through this initiative. One is a portrait of Eugene Field painted by Josh Holland in 1941. Holland taught sketching at the Hyde Park

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<sup>38</sup> Albany Park District, "Minutes of the Albany Park District," Volume 3, May 2, 1932, 191.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, April 25, 1932, 186.

<sup>40</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago's Parks*, Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, VA: 2001, 24.

<sup>41</sup> A full accounting of the WPA improvements to the park is listed in Volumes 1 through 7, Chicago Park District Annual Reports, 1935 - 1941.

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Club of the Jewish Community Center in the late 1940s.<sup>42</sup> A larger WPA mural in the field house is entitled "The Participation of Youth in the Realm of the Fine Arts." In the upper right hand corner of this painting are the initials PAC. This likely signifies Pottawatomie Art Class, which was taught by George Hruska, a portrait artist who created a mural for *A Century of Progress*, Chicago's 1933-34 World's Fair.<sup>43</sup>

In the late 1930s, homeowners in the North Park and Albany Park communities requested improvements to the North Branch of the Chicago River to help alleviate flooding. The City of Chicago's Department of Rivers and Harbors conducted a WPA project to "do away with continual clogging up of the stream by mud and debris and resultant stagnation."<sup>44</sup> Conducted in 1940 and 1941, the work involved dredging and excavating the bed of the river, re-grading and stabilizing some of the banks, and laying a V-shaped concrete channel on the floor of the river. The work extended from the North Shore Channel approximately one mile to Ridgeway Avenue, near the footbridge in Eugene Field Park.

The Chicago Park District began planning an extension to the park, which was then slightly less than 10 acres in size, in the late 1940s. Approximately three acres were acquired at the northeastern edge of the park. In January of 1950, the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners approved an expenditure of \$50,000 for improvements to the extension.<sup>45</sup> The new acreage provided greatly improved ball fields for the park. In 1951, as this work was underway, the park district also altered the children's playground by removing the area's original paths, and installing a new shelter, wading pool, and sand court. The park district also rebuilt the tennis courts and added the basketball court.

In the 1950s, programming increasingly became the priority and the Chicago Park District slowly began decreasing the high level of maintenance that the landscapes and facilities had received during the WPA years. The park district began removing shrubbery from Eugene Field Park in the mid 1950s. In 1975, the park district demolished the small building located near North Avers just south of the river, which was originally built as a garage and tool house in 1925, and later converted to a shelter and used as the site's first field house.

By the late 1970s, community residents began asking for park improvements. They requested the rehabilitation of the playground, planting of trees and shrubs, expansion of parkland along the river, a bike trail system and other improvements. In 1979, the City of Chicago acquired the land between North Lawndale Avenue and North Monticello Avenue to extend the southeast boundary of the park. The City acquired and improved the .53 acre parcel through its Community Improvement Bond Fund. The City began leasing the site to the park district with the intent of soon deeding the property. This land transfer has not yet taken place.

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<sup>42</sup> "Grafic [sic.] Arts Exhibit to Open Tuesday at Center in Hyde Park," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 4, 1948.

<sup>43</sup> "Art Exhibition Show Work of Park Painters," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 7, 1940.

<sup>44</sup> "Concrete Work on River Branch Nearing Finish," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 20, 1941.

<sup>45</sup> Chicago Park District, Journal of the Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners of the Chicago Park District for the Year 1949-1950, January 10, 1950, 465.

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In the 1990s and early 2000s, the Chicago Park District began making significant improvements to Eugene Field Park, many of which had been requested by the community years earlier. These improvements include renovating the basketball court, constructing a soft surface playground, planting trees and shrubs, rebuilding the footbridge, installing new lighting, and constructing a new bicycle path that links the park with the Carmen Avenue connector. This bicycle path system extends to Kiwanis and River Parks.

The Chicago Park District also recently enlarged Eugene Field Park by 3.2 acres through the acquisition of properties north and west of the existing park. The North Branch of the Chicago River skirts along or carves through both parcels. The property to the north, adjacent to West Foster Avenue had previously been part of Bohemian National Cemetery. The property to the west is not contiguous with the western boundary of the park. It is adjacent to the southeast corner of West Foster and North Pulaski avenues and was previously a commercial property. The acquisition was made possible by an Open Land Trust Grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The enlargement of Eugene Field Park helps fulfill the goal of increasing the amount of public land adjacent to the Chicago River which has been a priority of the Chicago Park District and recommended in the *Chicago River Master Plan* "Connecting People to the River."

Over the years, Eugene Field Park has continuously provided the community with a variety of athletic, recreational, social, and educational programs and has maintained a special focus on the arts and culture. Although it has adapted to modern needs, the park retains a good deal of historic fabric. Today Eugene Field Park is designated as cultural center, and provides many programs similar to those that were historically offered in the park, such as drama and play production, story telling, ceramics, painting, indoor soccer, and basketball. The arts focus has included recent projects in which children in Chicago Park District programs have produced a mural that is mounted on a panel on the front façade of the field house, and a mosaic which is also on a panel that hangs in the vestibule of the front entryway. The mosaic project was sponsored by Gallery 37 in the Parks in 2003. Gerry Lang of the Chicago Public Art Group served as the lead artist. The children selected the theme of Eugene Field's writings for the mosaic— providing another link for current and future generations with the history of the park.

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

**Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The property is composed of one contributing site and two non-contributing sites. The contributing site is bounded on the north by the south curb-line of W. Foster Ave., on the south by private property that lies south of a line extending east from the south curb-line of W. Carmen Ave. from the alley just west of the field house to Monticello Ave., and between the east curb-line of N. Avers and the alley just west of the field house the south boundary is private property that is in line with the north curb-line of the alley that lies north of W. Carmen Ave. The eastern boundary is the west curb-line of Monticello Ave. on the south side of the North Branch of the Chicago River. On the north side of the river, the property is bounded on the east by the west curb-line of the alley west of N. Monticello Ave. and the western boundary is the east curb-line of N. Avers. Ave. The two non contributing sites include a 1.4-acre crescent shaped parcel which is bounded by the north by the south bank of the North Branch of the Chicago River, on the south by W. Foster Ave. on the east by the river and on the west by the river. The second non-contributing site is 3.23-acres in size. The North Branch of the Chicago River carves through the site. This site is bounded on the north by south curb-line of W. Foster Ave. on the south by private property on the east by private property and on the west by the east curb-line of N. Pulaski Ave.

**Boundary Justification**

This is the plot of land historically associated with the park during its period significance as well as a .53-acre extension made in 1979 that is contiguous to the park and similar in appearance to the adjoining park landscape. The boundaries also include two non-contributing sites that are parcels that were recently added to the park by the Chicago Park District and are part of Eugene Field's official boundaries.

**UTM References-Zone 16**

	Easting	Northing
1.	439669	4647310
2.	439871	4647376
3.	440000	4647320
4.	440317	4647310
5.	440329	4647132
6.	440117	4647125
7.	439966	4647164
8.	439956	4647308
9.	439771	4647308
10.	439764	4647198
11.	439671	4647196

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

**Photographs**

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
View of Field House looking west  
Photo 1, Feature Nos. 1

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
Interior view of auditorium looking south  
Photo 2, Feature Nos. 1

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
Interior view of auditorium looking northeast  
Photo 3, Feature Nos. 1

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
Interior view of auditorium looking southwest  
Photo 4, Feature Nos. 1

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
View of footbridge and field house looking southwest  
Photo 5, Feature Nos. 1, 7

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National Park Service

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
View of landscape and path looking northwest  
Photo 6

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
View of circular drive looking northwest  
Photo 7, Feature No. 2

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
View of footbridge looking northwest  
Photo 8, Feature No. 7

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
View of Chicago River and wall looking northwest  
Photo 9, Feature No. 6

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
View of Chicago River and landscape looking southeast  
Photo 10

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**Eugene Field Park, Cook County, Illinois**

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
View of light tower looking northwest  
Photo 11, Feature No. 8

Eugene Field Park  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach  
November 2, 2005  
Chicago Park District  
View of basketball court land shelter looking northwest  
Photo 12, Feature No. 13, 11



City of Chicago  
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning  
and Development

Lori T. Healey  
Commissioner

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Tracy A. Sculle  
Survey & National Register Coordinator  
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency  
1 Old State Capitol  
Springfield, IL 62702

**Re: Chicago nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for**  
• **Thomas Jefferson Memorial Park, 4822 N. Long Ave.,**  
• **Eugene Field Park, 5100 N. Ridgeway, and**  
• **Grand Crossing Park, 7655 S. Ingleside**

Dear Ms. Sculle:

This is in response to your letters of April 18, 2006, to Mayor Richard M. Daley and the Commission on Chicago Landmarks asking for the Commission's comments on the nominations of the properties referenced above to the National Register of Historic Places. As a Certified Local Government (CLG), the City of Chicago is given the opportunity to comment on local nominations to the National Register prior to being considered by the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council.

At its regular meeting of June 1, 2006, the Commission voted unanimously to support the National Register listings for all three nominations. The Commission's resolution is attached.

Please contact Terry Tatum of my staff at 312-744-9147 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Brian Goeken  
Deputy Commissioner  
Landmarks Division

Originated by:

Terry Tatum  
Director of Research  
Landmarks Division

encl.

cc: Alderman Patrick J. Levar, 45<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Alderman Margaret Laurino, 39<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Alderman Todd Stroger, 8<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Julia Bachrach, Chicago Park District  
Arnold Randall, Chicago Park District  
Lori T. Healey, DPD  
Judy Minor-Jackson, DPD  
Wendy W. Williams, DPD  
Danita Childers, DPD  
Val Zillig, DPD  
Lynette Wilson, Ref. # 06-00720846





Resolution  
by the  
Commission on Chicago Landmarks  
on the  
Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places  
for

**Thomas Jefferson Memorial Park, 4822 N. Long Ave.,**

**Eugene Field Park, 5100 N. Ridgeway,**

and

**Grand Crossing Park, 7655 S. Ingleside**

June 1, 2006

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks finds that:

- Thomas Jefferson Memorial Park, Eugene Field Park, and Grand Crossing Park are all significant for their histories as Chicago neighborhood parks and exemplify the importance of such parks in the history of Chicago neighborhoods; and
- All three parks are locally significant and eligible for listing to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and C for Entertainment/Recreation and Architecture; and
- Thomas Jefferson Memorial Park and Eugene Field Park are also eligible for listing to the National Register under Criterion A for Social History; and
- Grand Crossing Park is also eligible for listing to the National Register under Criterion C for Landscape Architecture.

*Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks that it hereby supports the listing of all three nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.*



# Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

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[www.illinois-history.gov](http://www.illinois-history.gov)

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Richard M. Daley, City of Chicago  
Brian Goeken, Landmarks Division, Department of Planning and  
Development

FROM: Tracey A. Sculle, Survey and National Register Coordinator → AS

DATE: April 17, 2006

SUBJECT: Preliminary Opinion on Eugene Field Park in Chicago, Illinois

Eugene Field Park located at 5100 North Ridgeway Avenue (mailing address) is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the Multiple Property Documentation Form, entitled "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District." The park has irregular boundaries with portions of the park both north and south of Foster Avenue, east of Pulaski Road. The park is locally significant and meets Criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for the following areas of significance: Entertainment/ Recreation, Social History, and Architecture. Its period of significance is from 1925 to 1956, the fifty-year cutoff for National Register significance. Eugene Field Park was created by the Albany Park District. This district was consolidated into the Chicago Park District in 1934. The original plan for the park was prepared by landscape gardener Henry J. Stockmans. Clarence Hatzfeld made various recommendations about the park's development and designed the field house in 1930. Eugene Field Park retains sufficient integrity to convey both its historic and architectural importance and will make a fine addition to the National Register of Historic Places.

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 8/07/06 THROUGH  
8/11/06

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number, NHL,  
Action, Date, Multiple Name

CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES COUNTY,  
Santa Anita Park,  
285 W. Huntington Dr.,  
Arcadia, 06000672,  
DETERMINED ELIGIBLE, 8/03/06

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Eugene Field Park,  
5100 N. Ridgeway Ave.,  
Chicago, 06000677,  
LISTED, 8/08/06  
(Chicago Park District MPS)

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
First Congregational Church of Western Springs,  
1106 Chestnut St.,  
Western Springs, 06000673,  
LISTED, 8/08/06

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Grand Crossing Park,  
7655 S. Ingleside Ave.,  
Chicago, 06000678,  
LISTED, 8/08/06  
(Chicago Park District MPS)

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Jefferson Park,  
4822 N. Long Ave.,  
Chicago, 06000679,  
LISTED, 8/08/06  
(Chicago Park District MPS)

ILLINOIS, LAKE COUNTY,